

La Pasqua in Italia

General information

Easter (**PASQUA**) plays a central role in Italy: it is *the second most important festivity* after Christmas.

Easter time in Italy means spending time with family, eating good food, and picnicking in the countryside but it is also preparation to celebrate the resurrection.

So, during the holy week throughout Italy, people commemorate the last week of the life of Jesus Christ (**GESÙ CRISTO**) with rituals, processions, *and... with more than 3.000 passion plays on Good Friday!* In fact the most important religious traditions are those connected to the **Passion of Christ (LA PASSIONE DI GESÙ)**. Still now in several parts of Italy the pageantry connected to the **Passion and Death of Christ (LA PASSIONE E LA MORTE DI CRISTO)** are still a very important part of the festivity

In general **The Holy Week (LA SETTIMANA SANTA)** celebrations across Italy reflect regional differences, and are remnants of religion, peasant lore and pagan influences.

Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday (LA DOMENICA DELLE PALME or simply **LE PALME**) commemorates the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem where the people greeted him by waving palm leaves.

Churches (LE CHIESE) are adorned with **palm baskets (CESTINI DI PALME)** and **olive branches (RAMI DI ULIVO)** which are blessed by the **parish priest (PRETE** or **SACERDOTE)** and are then given out to the people gathered for the ceremony.

On the top of that people like to exchange a **blessed palm (PALMA BENEDETTA)** with friends and family.

Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday (GIOVEDÌ SANTO) commemorates the **Last Supper (L'ULTIMA CENA)** where Jesus transformed his body and blood into the Eucharist. Jesus also cleansed the feet of his disciple and this is a ceremony that is recreated in all churches.

Also all (**ALTARI**) are decorated with flowers and humble gifts and people follow the tradition of visiting 3 churches as a symbol of praying at Jesus **sepulchre (SEPOLCRO)**

Good Friday

Good Friday (VENERDÌ SANTO) is the day on which Jesus was crucified on the cross. Many towns and villages commemorate Good Friday with a **procession (PROCESSIONE)** of the 'Passion of Christ' in which people carry crosses or recreate the 'Stations of the Cross' or carrying of the cross by Jesus.

In Tuscany the procession is called "**Degli incapucciati**" (**the hooded**) and people are in bare feet and chains in sign of devotion.

In **Rome** the **Via Crucis** is led by the **Pope**. It is very famous, spectacular and suggestive. It's basically a funeral march with the stations of the cross.

Holy Saturday

Holy Saturday (**SABATO SANTO**) is a day of mourning, prayer and preparation for the resurrection of Christ.

Easter Sunday

On **Easter Sunday** (**LA DOMENICA DI PASQUA**) after the long Lent period, people celebrate the **resurrection** (**LA RESURREZIONE**).

The family celebration of Easter Sunday includes a glorious, intense **mass** (**LA MESSA**) with everyone dressed in their best dresses, bonnets, suits and ties, a visit to the cemetery and a traditional day-long banquet. Even those who don't usually go to church attend mass on that day.

Easter Monday

The day after Easter, **Easter Monday** known as (**PASQUETTA little Easter**), is just as important. A bit more subdued Pasquetta is generally dedicated to outdoor trips and picnics with family and friends. People hit the country, the beach, and the mountains, anywhere idyllic enough to make the most of this special day.

TRADITIONAL EASTER MEALS

As it is for Christmas also Easter has its traditional meals which can vary from region to region, but **eggs and roasted lamb** are common elements everywhere.

Eggs (**LE UOVA**) represent life, fertility, and renewal, all of which are essential symbols of Easter and are present in many recipes and even cakes..

Roasted lamb (**AGNELLO ARROSTO**), as a symbol of birth, is a traditional main course.

The Chocolate egg (**L'UOVO DI CIOCCOLATO**) is a traditional Easter treat especially for children. Eggs are beautifully wrapped in elaborate, colourful, decorative paper and come with a **gift or surprise** (**REGALO** or **SORPRESA**) inside which can be small or not so small.

The hand made ones can be very expensive and it is possible to have requests selecting in advance the gift it will contain. Many engagements began in Easter, with an engagement ring hidden in an egg.

Chocolate eggs are a symbol of Easter even for non religious people. Everybody gets an egg for their dear ones.

Inside each hidden a small gift. Or not so small, depending on how luxury the egg is! It is also possible to request a custom made egg, selecting in advance the gift it will contain. Many engagements began in Easter, with an engagement ring hidden in an egg.

It is important to say that also Easter has an official Easter cake is the **Eastern Dove** (**LA COLOMBA**) **Colomba** that represents peace.

Another typical cake is a sheep shaped almond pastry cake called la **Pecorella**.

There is also a great number of sweet or savoury cakes where the principal ingredients are boiled eggs.

BUONA PASQUA !